



NEWS RELEASE

Arizona House of Representatives

Representative Mark Finchem (R-11)

1700 West Washington • Phoenix, Arizona • 85007-2844

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rep. Mark Finchem: “Teachers Are Constituents Too”

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX – Representative Mark Finchem (R-11) issued the following statement today in response to recent teacher pay discussions:

“Research takes nothing away from the fact that teachers have been notoriously underpaid. Those who prefer the closed loop of arguing that known fact, stifle any attempt to ‘discuss’ how we might learn what we don’t know, including the whole teacher’s employment experience. But that is only the starting point, not the end result. To build a great place to work, the first step is recognizing that the employment environment is more than just pay. Giving voice to the people who are in the environment is a proven path to building great places to work.

There seems to be a universally accepted conclusion that most teachers are not paid enough for what they do, especially K-12 education, but shouldn’t the broader question be to find out what else keeps teachers in the classroom? What else makes them leave? What else drives satisfaction? After all, every other profession recognizes money is not the only important element to keeping people employed and happy.

If pay were the primary factor for teachers to become teachers or to stay teachers, since one-room school houses across the prairie began, nobody would become a teacher in the first place. There is often a higher calling for many and an unselfish human desire to help mold creative thinkers for future generations. Just as R & D is important to industries, teachers need to be included in the process. Like any profession, there can be a variety of reasons why one stays the course, in spite of low pay. Why not find out? Clichés like ‘think outside the box’ or ‘kids deserve better’ are more than cute phrases and looking at more than the numbers could be the only way to recognize the answers. Stimulating the gray matter can’t hurt and demands a chance.

Who among us have all the answers already?

Perhaps one fundamental reality can begin the conversation in earnest. Education has been overdue for major improvement for a long time, and every year the only solution is throwing more money at it every legislative session. Educating children can't be determined on a graph or a chart or by stuffing square pegs into round holes in the one-size-fits-all fashion.

Assumptions (like pre-conceived notions) can cripple organizations, companies, and governments. Parents, teachers, and students are the highest stakeholders of all. The type of investigation required could take some time. Engage those with integrity to achieve meaningful results; wouldn't that be worth it?

It has become cliché to say 'kids deserve better.' While they certainly do, who is doing the research or improving the process that takes into consideration parents and teachers and students in more than a superficial way? Lawmakers do not hire or pay teachers but are expected to find a way to generate the funds and hope for the best.

Mature adults take the time to evaluate, not just what they know, but they also seek to gain a better understanding of what they might be missing. It is our responsibility to develop solutions to more than what we already know. I would prefer to hear from teachers (an enormous constituency group) about what they think is important beyond pay. Many of my colleagues and I do not want to merely repeat the past, thinking somehow we will suddenly solve the problem, when we may not know all of the elements of the problem.

Those who seek to deny teachers a voice do a serious disservice to their personal best interests."

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CONTACT:

**Matthew Specht
Director of Communications
House Majority Staff
602-926-5518
mspecht@azleg.gov**